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ABSTRACT

This issue is the first of a series that will be made available to persons interested in the problems and potentialities of human motivation. Each issue will be devoted to a discussion of one aspect of motivation and will report practices, research, and theory development in this field. Features will include announcements of publications and professional activities. Those interested in recieving this quarterly newsletter should request that their name be placed on the mailing list. (Author/DJB)

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from the Center for the Study of Motivation and Human Abilities:

MOTIVATION QUARTERLY

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This issue of MOTIVATION QUARTERLY is the first of a series that will be made available to persons interested in the problems and potentialities of human motivation. Each issue will be devoted to a discussion of one aspect of motivation and will report practices, research, and theory development in this field.

Motivation is what it's all about

During the last several years I have had an opportunity to engage in a series of research efforts which relate to the concept of academic motivation. The technical reports of some of those studies are referred to elsewhere in this issue and will not be described here. Persons interested in studying those reports in detail will find them in the February 1970, issue of *Theory Into Practice* and in *Curriculum Development for Better Schools.* Rather, what I would like to do here is share some of the observations and some of the results that have become apparent to me during the course of these investigations.

To date, more than 20,000 young persons have been involved in these studies in one way or another. Using various kinds of theoretical formulations, various definitions of motivation, and various types of experimental procedures, my colleagues and I at the Center for the Study of Motivation and Human Abilities have been working to devise instruments and procedures for assessing the level and types of motivation which are reflected in human behavior.

Using cross-disciplinary approaches in attempts to develop valid and reliable instruments for measuring motivation, we have studied the responses from a broad cross-section of adolescents and young adults, of students from depressed rural regions such as Appalachia, small towns, plush suburbs, inner city schools, segregated schools in the South, de facto segregated schools in the North, medical schools, prisons and reformatories, and laboratory schools.

First, whatever it is that causes young people to strive in school, it is different for boys than it is for girls. Differences according to sex are fairly common in psychological research, but such differences are very evident in all of the motivational research which we have done as well as that which I have read. That factor might not be too important except for the fact that most teachers deal with youngsters in the classroom as though they were neuter gender. Worse yet, some teachers apparently relate to their students as if they were trying to "make nice little girls out of the boys," but the boys won't have it. And I am with them, bless their recalcitrant little hearts. Studies repeatedly show that teachers call on girls more frequently than they call on boys and give girls higher marks in school than boys, even though standardized achievement scores are generally the same or often even favor the boys.

Even though there is every reason to believe that the level of motivation that young people bring with them when they enter school is about the same for boys as it is for girls, by the time they enter junior high school the average level of motivation among girls is more positive and the average level of motivation among boys more negative. Later, in the senior high school and early college years, those patterns apparently begin to reverse themselves, but during most of the time that they are in public school, the motivational level of boys and girls differs considerably. These generalizations pertain to the averages for groups, of course, and not to particular individuals.

Second, whatever motivation is, it is somehow related to social class. We all know that, I guess, but the data in our studies clearly support the notion that youngsters who come from disadvantaged backgrounds have less positive motivation to learn in school than youngsters who come from advantaged backgrounds. Many federally

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sponsored projects were designed specifically to come to grips with this phenomenon. The fact that not all of those projects have been dramatic successes should not cause us to give up – the problem still exists. Motivation is inextricably intertwined with socioeconomic situation, and somehow, someway, we must get hold of that problem more effectively than we have to date.

Third, motivation to learn in school is a very durable phenomenon. Obviously motivation is not fixed, as the generalization above in point number one implies, but it does not change much, except over extended periods of time. Today, this six week's grading period, or even this semester is too short a period of time to expect much modification of an individual student's motivational pattern. If that sounds discouraging, just remember that it works both ways. That is, although it is very difficult to make any appreciable impact during a short period of time upon a student's motivation if he hates school, it will be very difficult in the same way for a wooden-headed teacher who lacks spirit or intelligence to dull a positively motivated youngster's desire to learn. He will be right there, day after day, working at the business of trying to learn whether his teacher inspires him or not. Motivation is a relatively constant thing.

Finally, whatever motivation is, it probably ought to be thought of in optimal rather than maximal terms. To say it another way and perhaps more precisely, motivation is related to achievement in curvilinear rather than linear ways. Because of this, there is an optimal level of motivation appropriate for a maximal level of achievement. Motivation is like blood pressure. Too much of it is bad. None of it is undesirable, but there is an optimal level of motivation conducive to the highest level of achievement. Too much motivation gets in the way of learning. The very real experience which most of us have had working with ability and achievement (which are linearly related) probably leads us to believe that motivation and achievement are related in a one-to-one, linear way, too. That is not correct. Some students can be too highly motivated, and after awhile motivation impedes rather than facilitates learning.

These generalizations still do not say what motivation is, but they do point out some of the factors to be considered if we want to understand motivation in any intelligent way. Without trying to pretend that I know what motivation really is, let me share with you some of the factors which I have come to identify as differentiating characteristics of young people whose motivations differ. Specifically, persons whose motivations are different have very different kinds of self-concepts, values, time perspectives, and personality structures, among other things.

In terms of the ways in which they see themselves, positively motivated students tend to have a more positive concept of self, and negatively motivated students tend to have a more negative concept of self. However, in addition to the fact that the directional aspect of self-concept is different, it is also apparent that young people whose motivations are positive tend, on the average, to have a stronger and more clearly articulated image of self.

The value structure of people whose motivations differ, differ too. Values represent what people believe in: what they are committed to and what they cherish. Values are very close to the center of self. And values give direction to behavior. They cause people to pursue one goal rather than another or to aspire to a given course of action as opposed to a different one. For example, young people who are motivated to learn in school value the abstract, the aesthetic, and the general, whereas persons who are not motivated to learn in school tend to value the concrete and the particular. This may simply be a function of the correlation of motivation with social class which was described above, I do not know. The value patterns are very different, of that I am sure.

Perception of time is another way in which people differ whose motivations differ. In general terms, students who are positively motivated tend to have what I would call a healthy or realistic perception of time. Those whose motivation to learn is negative have an unhealthy perception of time. That is, youngsters who hate school are likely to be obsessed with the present, afraid of the future, or preoccupied with the past in what seems to me to be an unhealthy way. Negatively motivated students "cling" to certain aspects of time and hold on to it or try to avoid it in ways which are not especially desirable psychologically. Students whose motivations to learn are positive, however, are more likely to be conscious of the present, aware of the future, or cognizant of the past, but they draw upon all segments of time in positive, realistic, healthy ways.

All of these factors suggest that the personality structure and psychodynamics of people whose motivations are different are different, too. And that is so. Persons who are positively motivated tend to be more tolerant of ambiguity, more open to experience, and have available more perceptual energy to reach out and bring the new and the novel and the unknown inside their central nervous system. Persons who are more negatively motivated, on the other hand, are less tolerant of ambiguity, more closed to experience. They have more elaborate defense mechanisms, and they have less perceptual energy to seek out novelty and uniqueness in their perceptual field. This means that positively motivated

about the center

The Center for the Study of Motivation and Human Abilities is a research and development center staffed by members and advanced graduate students of the Colleges of Education and of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

The assumptions guiding the work of the Center are (1) that human behavior is complex, that it is affected by many factors within human personality, within the environment, and within the social organizations of society, and (2) that intelligence, motivation, and creativity are different dimensions of human behavior.

Following are some of the kinds of questions to which researchers working within the Center have directed their attention:

What is motivation?

Why do men do what they do?

What is the relationship of self-concept to motivation toward school?

Can we motivate men to be creative?

Will counseling and encouragement affect the motivation and academic achievement of inner city youth attending college?

What are the relationships between attitudes toward school, logical reasoning, and fluency among inter city youth?

What is necessary to motivate man to deal with the ecological problems which threaten human survival?

What motivates man to work?

Can we measure motivation toward school?

Can we measure motivation to behave in anti-social ways (e.g., delinquency, criminality, etc.)?

During the past ten years studies have been accomplished involving thousands of persons, including studies of the academic motivation of adolescents, creativity of medical students, motivations of confined prisoners, and the aspirations and cognitive functionings of students from deprived backgrounds. Some have been experimental, others factor analytical, and still others of the case study type.

Four targeted problem areas have been singled out for study in the Center at the present time. Some of these are already being worked on and the others await investigation. These include (1) development of new and more powerful theoretical conceptualizations of human motivation; (2) identification of voids and anomalies in motivation research; (3) identification of the basic elements or fundamental components of human motivation; and (4) identification of what will stimulate and cultivate positive forms of motivation.

No single theoretical perspective or methodological approach dominates the activities of the Center, although the inclinations of the individual researchers are reflected in the problem areas which they pursue.

Its Major Projects

The major work of the Center currently is a Study of Human Motivation, which is a systematic effort to identify and organize all of the research reports that have been published in the field of human motivation in this century.

Supported by the Kettering Foundation, this is a monumental effort that involves identifying, copying, abstracting, organizing, and synthesizing all of the research reports published in the area of human motivation since 1900 in current journals.

These materials will be brought together in a storage and retreival system conceptualized on the basis of the content of the studies themselves and will be made available for the use of researchers in the field.

This system will be used as a basis for generating new theoretical models in the area of human motivation. Scholars in the field will be presented with hundreds of research abstracts and be asked to "go beyond" the present level of their thinking to create new conceptualizations. These papers and subsequent discussion will be made available to theoreticians and practitioners in the field by means of a series of conferences on human motivation.

Following these and following a careful study of the research abstracts, members of the Center staff will attempt to create new theoretical models, to generate "breakthrough" concepts in human motivation.

The intention is to attempt to transcend the existing kinds of understanding of human motivation toward creation of wholly new conceptual models and understandings in the areas of man's basic need to learn, the need to learn in school, self-concept, and man's social motives.

Three other special projects in the general area of human motivation under way at present in the Center deal with these questions:

Will available instruments accurately predict motivation toward school over an extended period of time?

What motivates man to behave in philanthropic ways?

What motivates persons to be creative and productive professors?

The Center for the Study of Motivation and Human Abilities at the Ohio State University is a research and development center designed to conceptualize, effect, and analyze research in the general areas of motivation and human abilities. The study of human behavior is pursued in a broad gauged, cross-disciplinary, multitheoretical, varied methodological manner, based upon a philosophy that "the proper study of mankind is man." Jack R. Frymier, Professor of Education, and Philip Clark, Associate Professor of Psychology, are co-directors. *Motivation Quarterly*, a publication of the Center, is supported by funds from the Charles F. Kettering Foundation.

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persons suspend judgment more readily, move toward that which is not familiar or not clear, and prejudge less frequently. Those who dislike school, however, are likely to be characterized as making snap-judgments, having a polarized-type thought process (for example, using "right" or "wrong" categories in their thinking, "good" or "bad," "this or that,") rather than seeing ideas as points along a continuum to be comprehended and explored.

What are the implications of these ideas for those of us who teach? There are many implications, it seems to me. Let me explore one.

Self-concept is learned behavior. No person is born hating himself. No person is born feeling good about himself. An individual's concept of self is learned, and it is learned in part on the basis of feedback he receives from the significant others in his life. Some of this feedback is experienced at home, some on the playground, and some at school. It comes from parents, peers, and teachers. Teachers are an especially significant source of feedback information, for they provide a steady stream of information that becomes the basis of a young person's development of concept of self.

On the basis of studies of teacher-student interaction, we know that teachers interact with their classroom groups hundreds and hundreds of times each day. Some researchers suggest that these interactions number in the thousands every day. Regardless of the exact count, it is apparent that teachers' interactions with their classes go on at a very rapid pace. So rapid, in fact, that there is good reason to believe that most of these interactions are not deliberate or even rational.

Teachers are very deliberate, very rational people before school starts in the mornings as they select their instructional materials, plan learning activities, and anticipate the activities of the day. But all day long teacher-student interaction occurs at a very rapid pace: "Johnny go to the board." "Everybody take out your books and turn to page 93." "That is not right, Mary, try again." "For goodness sakes, Billy, stop pestering Mary, or I'll have to keep you after school." And on and on. All day long the teacher "bounces" off the class in a sequence of very rapid interactions.

Some teachers have a style of bouncing which is positive: "Good work." "That's fine, Betty, now explain it to the class so they can all understand." "Attaboy." "You are doing great." This is positive feedback that tells all of the students they are worthwhile, they do count, they have value, they can make it.

Other teachers, however, have negative "bouncing" styles. They are critical. They are sarcastic. They humiliate their students and degrade them in minor or important ways. Hundreds of times a day, thousands of times a week, millions and millions of times a year they provide feedback to their students that they are not capable, they are not important, they cannot do it. Such is the stuff out of which negative concepts are made.

If motivation to learn manifests itself in terms of how the young people see themselves, then those of us who teach must become instruments of positive feedback.

Other factors are important, too. Perhaps we can learn to conceive of and utilize time as a variable rather than a constant in an effort to help students *master* learning and, thus, develop positive self-images, through congitive and psychomotor gain.

Can we devise situations in which values are examined? Are we deliberately or inadvertently fostering negative motivation by fostering intolerance of ambiguity when we teach "this is right and that is wrong" as we do, for instance, in the typical multiple-choice test items that characterize so much of our evaluation and marking practice? Such questions warrant further study.

These represent some of the facets of motivation as I have come to understand that concept in empirical ways. Future issues of the MOTIVATION QUARTERLY will explore these ideas further, as well as describe other people's research and practice in the field.

Jack R. Frymier

November 19 and 20

November 19 and 20, 1970, have been announced as the dates for the second Centennial Conference on Human Motivation.

Activities of the conference, including the appearance of four speakers who will present papers, are being planned at the present time.

The first conference was held June 16 and 17 on the Ohio State campus. Papers were presented by Professors Leland Jacobs, Columbia University; Ross Mooney, The Ohio State University; Arthur Combs, University of Florida; and Lawrence Stenhouse, University of East Anglia.

Persons interested in attending the second conference should write for information to: Professor Jack R. Frymier, College of Education, 121 Ramseyer Hall, 29 W. Woodruff Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43210.

Worth Reading

The desire to learn. What is it? Where does it come from? Why does it sometimes go? Can it be measured? Nurtured? Altered? These are some of the questions authors deal with in the next issue of *Theory Into Practice* on the theme "The Desire to Learn." Authors and their articles include Jack R. Frymier, "Development and Validation of a Motivation Index" and "Motivation: the Mainspring and Gyroscope of Learning"; Gardner Murphy, "Motivation: the Key to Changing Educational Times"; Walter B. Waetjen, "The Teacher and Motivation"; Philip M. Clark, "Psychology, Education, and the Concept of Motivation"; Sara West and Donald Uhlenberg, "Measuring Motivation"; W. Scott Bower, Joe L. Boyer, and Elinor A. Scheier, "Research Related to Academic Achievement Motivation: an Illustrative Review." Copies can be ordered from *Theory Into Practice*, 104 Ramseyer Hall, The Ohio State University, 29 W. Woodruff Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43210. Price is $1.50.